

# **From Mergasor to Choman The Story of the Shevdin Families**

**The Spirit of Kurdistan**

Turkey - United States of America

## Author's Note

*To ensure clarity and accessibility for modern readers and researchers, this document intentionally avoids the use of outdated or archaic place names, terms, and phrases. While we respect and acknowledge the historical significance of older Kurdish, Ottoman, and regional terms, we have chosen contemporary equivalents to maintain readability and ease of reference. This approach allows both scholars and descendants to better locate and understand the Shevdin family's historical journey within today's geographic and cultural context.*

## Introducing

The history of the **Shevdin family** is a testament to the endurance, memory, and evolving identity of the Kurdish people. Spanning centuries and multiple regions of Kurdistan — from the highlands of **Çewlîk (Bingöl)** to the river valleys of **Mergasor** (Shewazur Valley—old name of the village of Shevdinies) and the foothills of **Choman and Rayat** — the Shevdin families have carried with them not only a name but a story deeply woven into the cultural and political fabric of Kurdish life.

This document provides a focused historical and cultural overview of the Shevdin lineage, tracing its **migration, settlement, and transformation** across time and geography. While the Shevdin are not structured as a classical tribal confederation, they are united by a shared heritage, memory, and identity that have allowed them to preserve their distinct presence throughout centuries of upheaval, migration, and renewal.

Much of what is known about the Shevdin comes from **oral histories, village records**, and references in Kurdish historical narratives. This overview attempts to bring those fragments together into a coherent account — not only of where the Shevdin came from, but **why their journey matters** within the broader Kurdish historical context.

In doing so, this text aims to preserve the voices of ancestors, the meanings behind their movement, and the cultural threads that continue to define the Shevdin family to this day.

According to **multiple oral sources from Ottoman Empire Resources**, the Shevdin family **was originally established in the Mergasor area**, in the **Zebari tribal zone**. (**Barzani Zone-Now**)

According to multiple oral traditions supported by references in **Ottoman administrative and tribal reports**, the **Shevdin family was originally founded and established in the Mergasor region**, specifically within the **Zebari tribal zone**, an area today largely associated with the **Barzani region**. This claim reorients the mainstream narrative that suggests a northern origin (Çewlik and Dersim) and places Shevdin's formative stage deep within the highlands and valleys of southern Kurdistan.

During the Ottoman period—particularly from the **15th to 17th century**—the Mergasor region served as a strategic and tribal frontier, home to the **Zebari confederation**, known for its influence in both regional autonomy and the broader Kurdish socio-political landscape. Within this setting, **the Shevdin family emerged as a distinct kinship entity**, possibly as a sub-clan or parallel line that evolved through intermarriage, land inheritance, and agricultural development. Ottoman census and tribal classifications often recorded such families based on geographic residence and tax obligation rather than distant ancestry, supporting the idea that **Shevdin was fully rooted in Mergasor during the Ottoman era**.

Over time, the Shevdin family in Mergasor expanded its reach to adjacent areas, especially toward **Choman**, after reportedly spending **nearly 200 years** in the Great Zab basin. The family became landowners, livestock herders, and mediators among neighboring clans, embedding themselves in the **Zebari-Barzani sociopolitical ecosystem**. Their continued use of **Kurmanji Kurdish**, traditional red **jamadani** attire, and agricultural practices reinforced their identity as both **local** and **historically significant**.

This interpretation does not negate earlier migratory traditions but rather presents a **localized, historically anchored identity** that aligns with **Ottoman patterns of tribal recognition**, tax collection (timar system), and settlement mapping. For descendants of the Shevdin family in **Choman, Rayat, Darband, Shora (Şorê), Nawenda, Gundejor, Galazher, Alana, and Dolaban**, this view enhances their claim to deep, generational ties with the land and the regional heritage of **Zebare Kevn (Great Zab)**.



## Origins and Early Homeland—Çewlîk (Bingöl)

The **Shevdin family**—written in various forms such as *Shevdin*, *Şevdîn*, *Shavdin*, or *Shevdini* — is a Kurdish lineage with roots deeply embedded in the historical region of **Çewlîk** (modern-day Bingöl Province) in Northern Kurdistan. This area, marked by its mountainous terrain and relative isolation, allowed tribal families to maintain autonomy and unique cultural traits throughout centuries of Ottoman rule. It is here, in a locality historically known as **Şêwezûr**, that the Shevdin are believed to have first formed as a distinct familial entity.

Inhabitants of this region, including the Shevdin, primarily spoke **Kurmanji Kurdish** and practiced a pastoral lifestyle supported by small-scale farming and seasonal migrations. The harsh winters, intertribal rivalries, and increased Ottoman pressures in the 18th and 19th centuries, however, pushed many Kurdish families — including the Shevdin — to migrate south in search of more stable conditions.

## Migration Through Dersim and Settlement in Mergasor (Zebare Kevn)

The migration route of the Shevdin passed through **Dersim** (present-day Tunceli), a stronghold of Kurdish resistance and sanctuary for displaced families. Oral histories suggest that the Shevdin stayed temporarily in valleys near **Pülümür** or **Ovacık**, forming alliances with local tribes. Though they did not settle there permanently, Dersim left a cultural imprint — one of defiance, spiritual depth, and tribal solidarity.

Eventually, the Shevdin families reached the mountainous region of **Mergasor**, located west of the **Great Zab River** (Zêyê Mezin), known in Kurdish oral history as **Zebare Kevn** — “Old Zabar.” This area offered fertile lands, a defensible landscape, and relative independence from direct imperial administration. Here, the Shevdin transitioned from a migrating family to a **settled lineage**, building stone homes, grazing herds, and embedding themselves into the local fabric of highland Kurdish life.

## Expansion into Rayat, Choman, and the Balakayati Highlands

In the late early 18th century, further social and political shifts led some Shevdin branches to **expand eastward** into the Rayat region, Choman, and the surrounding Balakayati district. In these areas, the family integrated into village governance, contributed to education and religious life, and maintained strong oral traditions. One of the most influential figures from this era was **Ali Agha Rayat**, a leader known for his military resistance and diplomatic skill, whose role is recorded in both British colonial accounts and Kurdish oral tradition. His leadership during regional conflicts helped establish the Shevdin as a respected and strategic force in Kurdish society.

## Cultural Identity, Language, and Continuity

The Shevdin family has maintained a strong sense of identity throughout its history. Although many members shifted from **Kurmanji** to **Sormanji** dialects as they moved south, the preservation of ancestral stories, clothing (notably the red *jamadani*), and seasonal rituals ensured cultural continuity. Their story is one of **adaptive resilience** — preserving a core Kurdish identity while navigating new landscapes and shifting political realities.

Today, Shevdin descendants live across the Erbil Governorate, including in **Choman, Rayat, Darband, Shora (Şorê), Nawenda, Gundejor, Galazher, Alana, Dolaban, and Erbil**, as well as in parts of Turkey and the diaspora. Though dispersed, they remain connected through family ties, oral memory, and land ownership that traces back generations.

The history of the Shevdin family is the story of the Kurdish people in miniature: rooted in the mountains, shaped by migration, and defined by perseverance. From the valleys of Çewlîk to the banks of the Great Zab, the Shevdin families have carried their name, values, and stories forward — a living heritage that continues to shape the identity of Kurdistan today.

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